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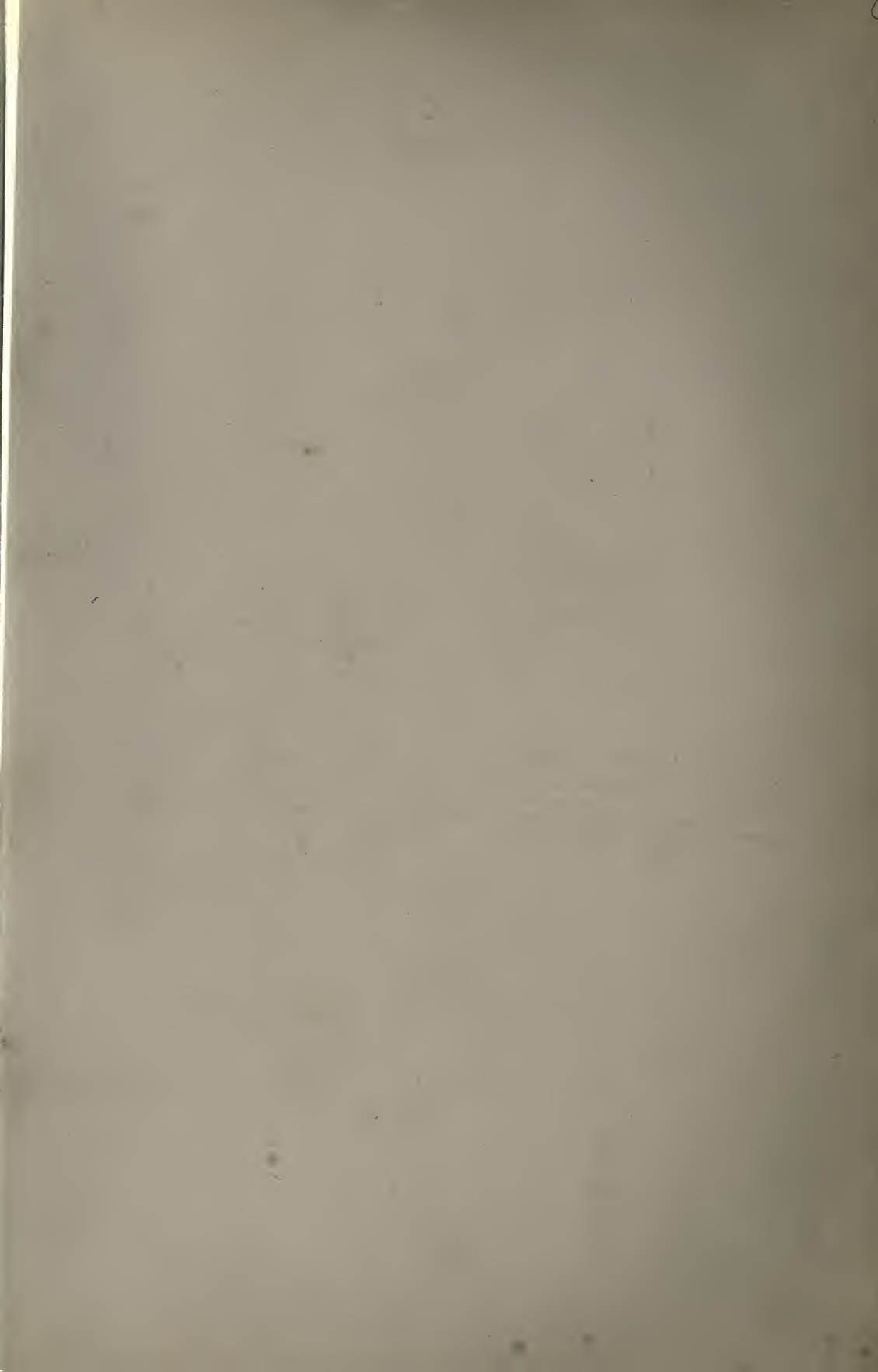
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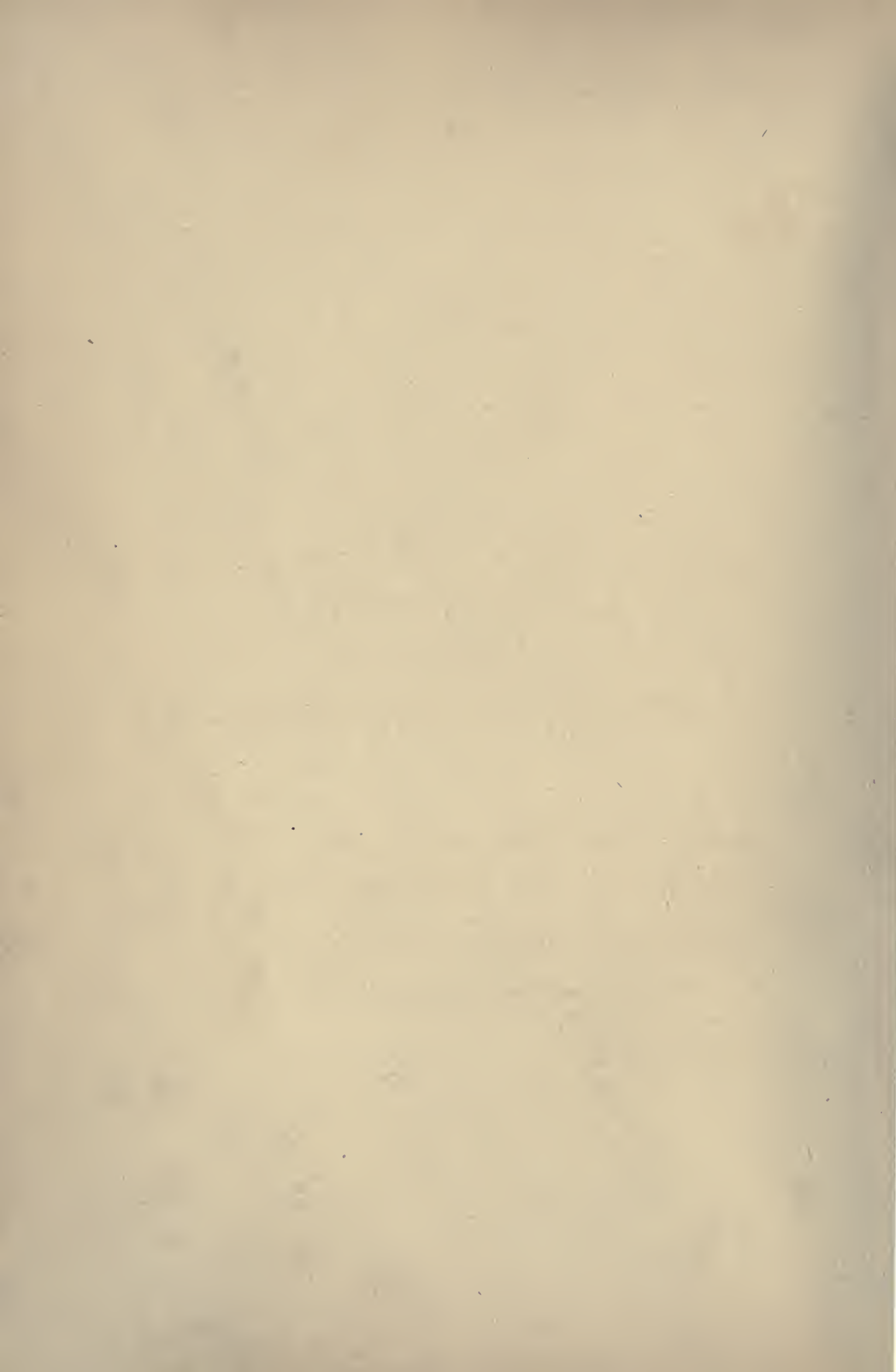
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TO
THE MEMORY
OF
A LOVED AND HONORED FATHER

This Poem

IS DEDICATED

BY
CHARLES DEXTER.



AS flowers to bees, as rain to flowers,
As sight to one who has not seen
These many years, is Love, serene
And steadfast through our checkered hours.

Mine eyes drank in the lovely scene
When Spring, from Winter's thrall set free,
Proclaimed on earth a jubilee,
And wood and hill and field grew green.

I saw the brilliant buds expand,
And bare their beauties to the sun :
The waters break their bonds and run,
The skies catch glory from the land.

From wood and hill and field I heard,
Caught up by every wandering wind,
A song of praise and joy combined,
From throat of many a gleeful bird.

And with the love-born season came
Remembrance of youth's sunny tide ;
I thought that he stood by my side
Who gave me life and gave me name.

Again I looked abroad, and lo !

Short-lived as joy the bloom had fled,

The woods were leafless : cold and dead

The earth was wrapped in shroud of snow.

Against the wall down which 't would leap,

Frost had impaled the foamy fall,

Unloosed the winds, and bid them all

Rage uncontrolled with blasting sweep.

I could not find the paths I trod

But yesterday : the bird was still

That sang from wood and field and hill, —

I knew that he was with his God.

O Love, who walkest through our years
Steadfast, serene, what guide of man
So fraught with joy since time began,
Whose way is yet so full of tears!

IN MEMORIAM.



I.

I HEAR the wave's sad monotone,
The answering wail of autumn wind,
And far from all of human kind
I sit upon the rocks alone.

Time was the sea sang joyously,
The autumn wind seemed almost glad,
When dear companionship I had
With one forever gone from me.

No day then altogether gloomed,
Though now and then a cloud would pass
Across my soul to think, alas!
How soon to part we two were doomed.

O best endowment of my days!
The wealth of love he showed me then
Dispelled the gloom, brought light again,
And filled my heart with hope and praise.

I should not murmur : God is Love :
Break, moaning wave, upon the shore,
Wail, answering wind, forevermore,
I know that we shall meet above.

II.

I COUNT it for my highest bliss
That he was more than parent, friend :
These two together often blend ;
But he was this, and more than this.

He was what one can rarely find,
Companion and my confidant :
Of all youth's follies tolerant,
And never to its virtues blind.

I told him all, he wished it so,
I brought him every joy to share,
He claimed the half of every care;
Thus coursed our lives in even flow :

Two streams, yet one, that spread afar
O'er Life's fair pastures rich and wide;
But rolled a deep, unbroken tide
Above the rocks and dangerous bar.

III.

I COUNT it for my chiefest pain
That in this wide world there is none,
Among a crowd of friends, not one
To whom I should not turn in vain ; —

In vain, when most I felt the need
Of some one to direct me right, —
To solve my doubt, to point my sight,
And show me what was Truth indeed.

Not one with that deep sympathy,
The best of Love's gifts manifold,
Not one, though all their names were told,
To feel his interest in me.

On whom at times though I might lean,
Not sure of what was right or wrong,
The very leaning made me strong,
More confident in deed and mien.

IV.

BRING in the wild buds pure and white;
It is his natal day, dear friend,
When youths and maids together wend
Their way to woods with garlands dight.

Bring hawthorn blossoms, roses bring,
The choicest that in gardens grow :
Such make a May-day wreath, you know ;
Be such our votive offering.

Bring smiles, as smiles this new-born May,
And words of thankfulness and praise ;
Pray God may grant him length of days,
And make his life a pleasant way.

Bring cypress with the black pine wed :
Nor bud nor blossom would we here,
But leaves of autumn, faded, sere ;
Bring tears, for he we loved is dead !

V.

I WALK the city's streets alone,
Yet not alone, for, as of yore,
His equal footsteps on the floor
Keep even measure with my own.

I speak with him, he answers me;
Of pleasant trifles is our talk,
As, arm in arm we slowly walk,
And now dissent and now agree.

I reach the home I love, am fain
To enter, but he enters not :
My dream is over, and the spot
Awakens all the olden pain.

VI.

I DO not need the marble bust
That fronts the table where I write ;
His form is ever full in sight,
Though all his earthly part be dust.

And when by chance my eye may rest
Upon his sculptured image there,
They seem not like, those features fair,
So much the mind portrays him best.

VII.

WHEN sun and rain had wound a thread
Of dark green ivy o'er his mound,
Among his papers this I found,
And through fast-dropping tears I read : —

“ Whene'er that final hour I see,
When I am called from earth to 'go,
Save those that from the first shock flow,
I pray ye, shed no tears o'er me.

“ But in the world supply my part,
And finish all I leave undone ;
Nor cease to be united, one
In every purpose and in heart.

“ With exultation, if perchance
I may deserve it, speak of me ;
Joy always to remember me ;
Impute my faults to ignorance.

“ Believe, though late in life, my aim
Was constantly some fault to mend ;
And think that ye, till life shall end,
By patient care may do the same.

“Such is the honor that I trust
May after death be given me ;
And such, ’mong friends, my memory,
When I am mingled with the dust.”

VIII.

HE spake the truth : I heard him say
That all the care a parent gives,
His children pay not while he lives,
But to their own the debt repay.

He spake the truth : I see 't is true,
I feel it when I note how I
Almost unconsciously apply
His teachings, my dear child, to you.

For not one word that I may speak
Of counsel or of sympathy,
But that he spake the same to me,
And made me strong where I was weak.

So if perchance you walk aright,
The credit will be his, not mine;
For I but work with his design,
And his example is my light.

IX.

COME, Sorrow, older than the years,
And sit beside my aching heart,
Thy balm to all my pain impart,
And bring sweet comfort with thy tears.

Come, bounding Joy, drive Grief away ;
He would not have me shed one tear
Who knows but joy in yonder sphere,
The endless joy of endless day.

Stay, sobbing sister, frolic boy,

Room for ye both within my heart ;

Clasp hands, ye nevermore may part,

Twins of the soul, O Grief, O Joy !

X.

NO day that brings its busy light,
No night that comes with silence, dim,
But Memory flits away to him,
Who nothing knows of day or night.

No star that lightens in the sky,
And flashes its clear ray to me,
But Fancy prompts the thought that he
Looks out in its refulgent eye.

No work that I may undertake
With faltering purpose, hands that fear,
But Hope will whisper he is near
To bless it, for the worker's sake.

No year that, ripened in the rime,
Is gathered to the shadowy Past,
But Faith assures me I at last
Shall come to touch the end of Time, —

The end of Time, and know again
Him, loved and known as parent, friend,
Where never Death shall come to rend
Love's ties, and where there is no pain.

XI.

I STOOD upon the wharf, to see
The earliest coming of the ship,
That, with her cradling rise and dip,
Slow rocked him back to home and me.

When down the bay, a speck at last,
She filled my weary, anxious eye,
And all too tardily drew nigh,
My heart beat painfully and fast, —

And rose and fell, as fell and rose
Each throbbing wave beneath her keel;
As Hope upon my thought would steal,
Or Fear Hope's timid step oppose.

XII.

A WHITE-HAIRED shadow, tenderly
And tearfully, we took him home ;
Not long we had him for our own,
He came among us but to die.

The seven suns of seven days
Shone on him from familiar skies ;
The eighth, we sadly closed his eyes,
And bowed to God's mysterious ways.

XIII.

THAT morn we laid him to his rest
In yonder city of the dead,
The sky shone brightest overhead,
Earth in midsummer pride was dressed.

And something of the perfect balm
And beauty of the day was mine :
A sense of peacefulness divine,
As when a troubled sea grows calm,—

Calm, and uplifts its sobbing breast
To softened airs and kindest sun,
That come when all the storm is done,
And bring sweet whisperings of rest.

XIV.

THAT morn we laid our cherished one
In yonder city of the dead,
I saw, by dark-robed Sister led,
A band of orphaned maidens come,

And strew upon him as he lay
Within his bed, deep in the mould,
Fresh flowers of purple, white, and gold,
Their debt of grateful love to pay.

And in my heart I bore away
The blessing of each votive bloom,
That spent its fragrance in his tomb,
And dropped to dust upon his clay.

XV.

THE last leaf trembles on the tree,
And, in wild dance, upon the ground
Its phantom comrades spin around,
With fast-increasing revelry.

The last leaf rattles on the tree,
And windy rain-gusts sweep the pane ;
The sailor, tossing on the main,
Longs for the shore he ne'er will see.

The last leaf 's whirled upon the ground,
And all the noisy revel 's still ;
In yonder hollow, 'neath the hill,
The ghostly dancers rest have found.

Bare as the stricken tree, I see
A battered hulk upon the shore ;
The sailor strives and longs no more,
Deep in the cavernous sea is he.

Man is a leaf upon Life's tree,
A sailor on Life's stormy wave ;
A little space, — he finds his grave
Beneath a mound, or in the sea.

XVI.

O THERE are times when I believe
That in the blissful realms above
Our loved and lost watch us with love,
Rejoice with us, and with us grieve,

According as we walk our way
With Truth and Right as guide and aim,
Or stumbling onward, blind and lame,
We lose the path and go astray ; —

And then I taste of perfect bliss,
When Duty calls me not in vain ;
And then I suffer untold pain,
When conscious that I go amiss.

XVII.

OUR loved and lost? Ay, loved are they,
Not lost, who have but gone before
To yonder far-off heavenly shore,
That we are nearing day by day.

I read the myth of long ago,
How Proserpine, dread Pluto's wife,
Upon the earth spent half her life,
Beneath it half, and then I know

'T was thus the pagan mind portrayed
The flight of the immortal soul
From death to life, to joy from dole,
In this the myth of Enna's maid.

But when I read what Jesus said,
The promise of the blessed word,
That Martha from his dear lips heard,
When Lazarus came forth who was dead, —

O then, by purer faith, I know
That he who walks no more with me
Is robed in immortality,
At peace with God, at end with woe.

XVIII.

AS one benighted gropes his way
Through tangled wood and briery lane,
And stumbles oft, and oft in vain
Bewails the loss of kindly day, —

As one who sails by dangerous shores
In hope of haven, yet in fear
Of sudden shipwreck lurking near,
And want of warning light deplores, —

I, threading through Life's thorny maze,
Or blown across its treacherous wave,
Mourn and remember him who gave
Me light and guidance all his days.

XIX.

O H! we might know, were we but wise,
That there is much beyond our ken;
Might feel from what vast height on men
God gazes down from his clear skies.

The depths of earth uncovered lie,
We force the mines to yield their spoil;
But vain is our most earnest toil,
Earth guards her secret from our eye.

We map the heaven, and we name
Its myriad stars, their distance know,
The wandering track of comet show,
And tell when it will come again.

Yet none may draw the veil away
From golden gate of Paradise ;
When thought to that fair realm would rise,
It breaks its wing in vain essay.

Our speech o'er continent and main
We flash upon the lightning's breath ;
But who that has gone down to Death
Sends back to us a word again ?

We drop the plummet in the sea ;
The mermaid's grot, the kraken's home
Appear, but there 's a deep unknown
That mocks our curiosity.

We think our lives a breath of wind,
Our knowledge but a paltry thing,
We give our thought a daring wing,
And vex with mysteries our mind.

We are not wise ; we are not wise ;
Tithonus was most rash of men,
And best for us that human ken
Soars not to worlds beyond the skies.

XX.

VEX not thyself, my soul, with thought
Of what may be in other spheres;
A simple faith should know no fears,
If life of Love and Truth be wrought.

Where once the poor Carthusian trod,
And mused on holy themes, and prayed,—
“Trust not thy reason, thou wast made
To love, not comprehend thy God,”—

I read above the gloomy cell,
And thought how vain are all the creeds :
This monk's pure faith meets all our needs,
Is our strong tower and citadel.

XXI.

FAR over sea I came with him
To that quaint, quiet English town,
When the wan twilight floated down,
Pale herald of the evening dim;—

Far over sea, where he was born;—
And on my dreamy sense were blown
Sweets that the hawthorn hedges own,
Bloom-bursting on his birthday morn.

'T was here the once proud Wolsey died:

In yonder gray old Abbey he

“A little earth for charity”

Was fain to beg, his bones to hide.

And o'er the crumbling ruin still,

As though to keep a memory green,

And cruel tooth of Time to screen,

The ivy winds and weaves at will.

'T was here a king with bannered train

O'er Bow Bridge crossed to bloody death,

What time a nation held its breath,

And battle raged on Bosworth plain.

'T was here the philosophic mind
 Was trained of one who found a grave,
 For that reluctant ear she gave
 To hopes more fleeting than the wind.

O, sad her fate! nine days a queen,
 She saw her husband's headless trunk,
 Nor from the cruel axe she shrunk,
 And all her years but seventeen!

All this I know doth fill thy page
 In History's tome, O pleasant town!
 The ruin, moss and ivy grown, —
 The king, — the queen, — the prelate sage.

Yet not for this art dear to me,

O pleasant town upon the Soar!

For this alone, — that he, no more,
Drew his first breath of life in thee!

XXII.

I TURNED me from the cloud-piled west,
Where slow the lurid torch of day
Quenched in the gloom its latest ray,—
From thoughts full of a vague unrest,

From bitter sense of my great loss,
From long communing with my grief,
Vexed that the years brought no relief,
Nor lightened aught of my sore cross,—

To where, full-orbed, the lamp of night
Slow lifted o'er the dusky wood,
Scattered the darkness where I stood,
And strewed the spot with mellow light.

And lo! the frowning clouds behind
Broke into hurrying bits, and clomb
High up the silver star-lit dome,
Themselves with silver tracings lined.

The weight was lifted; in my breast
The murmur hushed, instead I heard
Music, as when some storm-beat bird
Greets with faint song its new-found nest.

XXIII.

I HEAR the whetting of the scythes,
The mowers' whistle on the plains,
I see the slow-returning wains,
High laden, climb the homeward rise.

And every whispering zephyr breath
Is freighted with the odor caught
From the dead grass, that knew not aught
Of odor till it sank in death.

So, when he died, our common speech
Gave forth a fragrance, as we told
Of him, his virtues manifold,
And memories he had left to each.

XXIV.

ACROSS the lawn long shadows lie,
Like sentinels the grim pines stand,
Mute watchers o'er the sleeping land,
And slow the moon slides down the sky.

With folded wing the wind, asleep,
Wantons no more in frolic play;
The wild bird stops his flight midway,
And leaves his song but half complete.

The cricket underneath the sill,
Last of the life that stirs and wakes,
Faint and more faint his chirring makes,
Hushes at last, and all is still.

Sunk to sleep in the rooms above,
My dear ones know the calm of rest ;
She, wife and mother, helpmeet blest,
They, the sweet pledges of our love.

Under the silent stars I lie,
Lone, but where is there peace for me,
Longing for one I shall not see,
Who, though I call, will not reply?

XXV.

O SOUL ! find peace, the day will break
Above the wooded hills erelong,
The bird resume its flight and song,
And they that sleep again will wake.

And he, who sleeps beneath the mound,
Will he not see the dawn arise,
And hear the wild-bird as it flies,
Who knows God's holy peace profound?

XXVI.

I MEET the reapers in my walk ;
Of many an acre broad with corn,
And fields of bounteous harvest shorn,
They tell me, meaning pleasant talk.

One counts his vineyard's purple prize,
And tastes his wine ere yet 't is made ;
And one points to his orchards weighed
With golden fruit that glads the eyes.

They dream not that my thought alone
Is with the world-old Reaper, Death,
Who breathes on all a withering breath,
And harvests us as all his own.

XXVII.

THRO' gleams of sun, and glooms of shade,
July leads out the hallowed day ;
With something of a sea-voice play
The sad, sweet winds across the glade.

Four springs the faithful grass has grown
To velvet green above his head ;
Four summers, burned to brown and red,
Has been by scythe relentless mown ;

Four autumns have resplendent died,
 And strewed their glories where he lies ;
 Four winters from their sullen skies
 Have piled the pure snows high and wide ;

Four lonely years, since sadly we
 Of peace and him were both bereft ;
 Four slow-paced years, and I am left
 Alone with Love and Memory.

And all the day's weird mood is mine
 In soul, as slowly down the glade
 I stray from sunshine into shade,
 And every thought to him resign.

XXVIII.

BROWN are the woods; slow circle down
To the chill earth the shrivelled leaves;
Dead are the flowers; the meadow grieves,
Clad in a sober suit of brown.

I shiver in the raw wind's breath,
With tears my widowed eyes are dim,
As tide my wandering thoughts to him,
And from him darkly drift to Death.

XXIX.

LOSS makes Love bitter, some one sings;
To me it seems far otherwise :

Loss makes Love sweeter ; most we prize
Love's wealth when it has taken wings.

When I could see him every day,
Could walk and talk with him at will,
Love, thoughtless, drank its daily fill,
Unheeding how Time slipped away.

Once when he said, "Few years, and I
Must go before you as I ought,"
I silenced all the cruel thought,
And prayed I might be first to die.

But now that in his grave, O heart!
So much of Love is laid, 't is plain
How Death may be Love's precious gain,
In that Death takes Love's grosser part.

XXX.

WHAT kind of man was this you sing?
Some ask, who knew, yet knew him not:
How differing from the common lot
Was his? he did what noted thing?

Fame passed, 't is true, and saw him not;
And Envy, that attends on Fame;
And Pride, that courts a splendid name;
And Cares, of cruel Fame begot.

What kind of man? how speak of one,
With whom in such accord did move
The virtues, led by perfect Love,
That prominence undue had none?

Not all his sons may hope to say,
Nor all that they may strive to do,
Can render him one half his due,
Or half their filial tribute pay.

These words I borrow: "His mute dust
I honor, and his living worth;
Was never born into the earth
A man more pure and bold and just."

XXXI.

THE fitting word how may I find,
How aptly wed the thought to rhyme,
That shall be fragrant as sweet thyme,
With marjoram and basil twined?

Sweet herbs, that dried and withered shed
The flavor of their earliest days ;
Sweet thought, love born and born in praise
And honor of my father dead.

XXXII.

LET me repeat what others say,
That he was Honor's soul itself,
Whom never greed of praise or pelf
Could swerve from one straightforward way.

That he was liberal, and prone
To kindly view of men and things;
And quick to see the feeblest springs
Of good, where most saw vice alone.

That ever from his heart and purse
 Flowed sympathy and aid to those
 Who told a piteous tale of woes,
 E'en though they might a lie rehearse.

For oft he said, "How may we know
 But that a timely given mite,
 With one kind word, may win the fight
 They wage with sin amid their woe?"

I but repeat what most could see,
 That he had faith in Justice, Right;
 That none saw Truth with clearer sight,
 Obeyed her teachings more than he.

XXXIII.

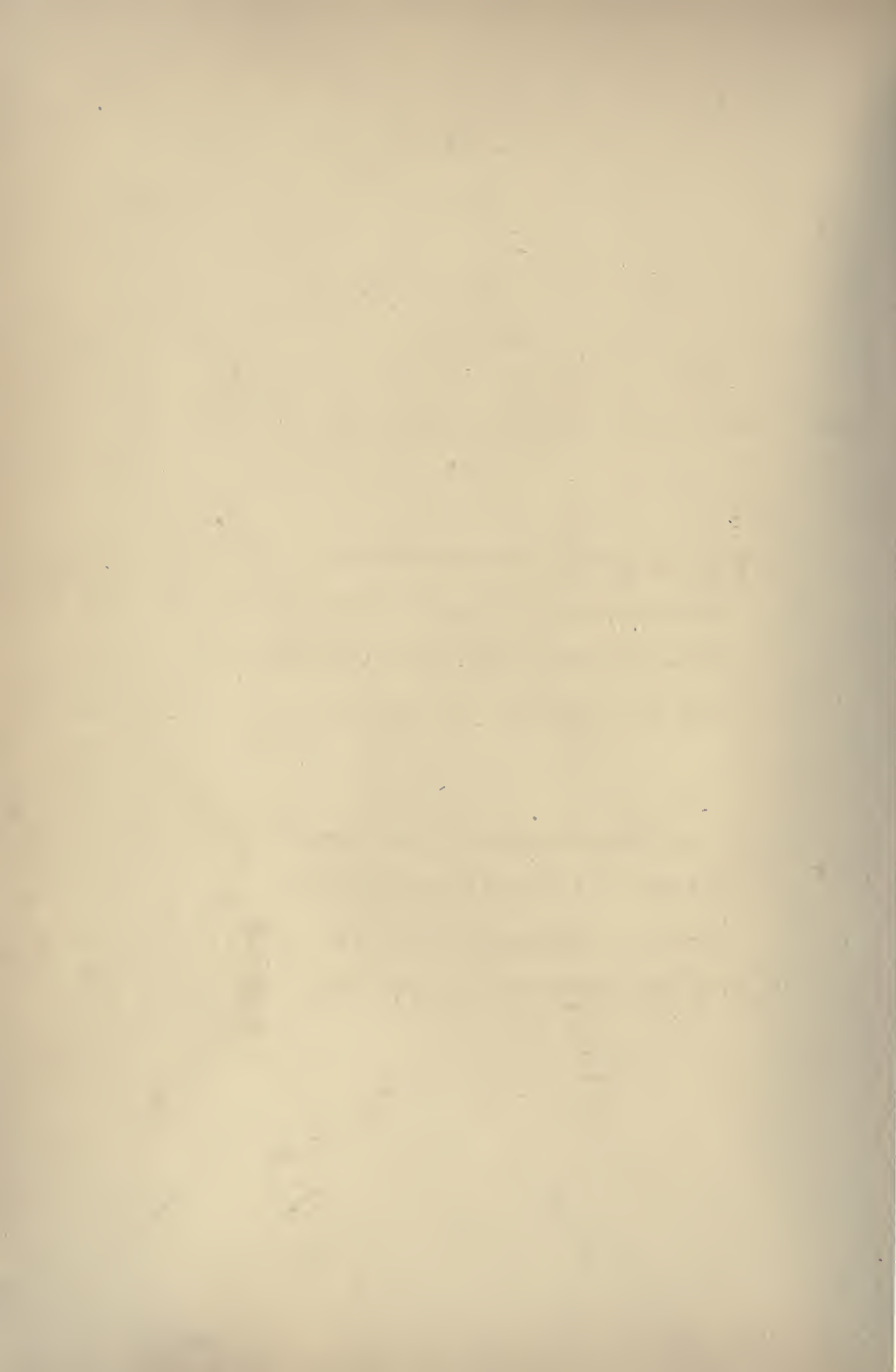
VAIN are mere words. They cannot show
Love's strength, but make its weakness plain ;
Then Love, be mute ; let my sore pain
In tears, not idle speech, o'erflow.

All day the cold gray autumn skies
Have bowed above the earth and wept
A rain of tears. The winds have slept,
Nor stirred the dead leaf where it lies.

And now the mist, with stealthy glide,
Spreads o'er the stark grim wood its shroud,
Broods on the valley, hangs, a cloud,
Prone on the mountain's craggy side.

So comes the lingering day to die;
No sign of life one sees or hears;
On the sad earth filled full with tears
The very rain falls silently.

O gathering mists! O skies that weep!
Bid the near Night descend and calm,
With the soft pressure of her palm,
Earth and its sorrows unto sleep!



DEAR Lord, in thy innumerable ways,
Who workest for the good of man,
What though inscrutable thy plan,—
I may not murmur,— only praise!

In the wild whirlwind's fiery breath,—
On battle's torn and bleeding plain,—
Where loathsome plague and famine reign,—
Thou art, and one pale angel, Death.

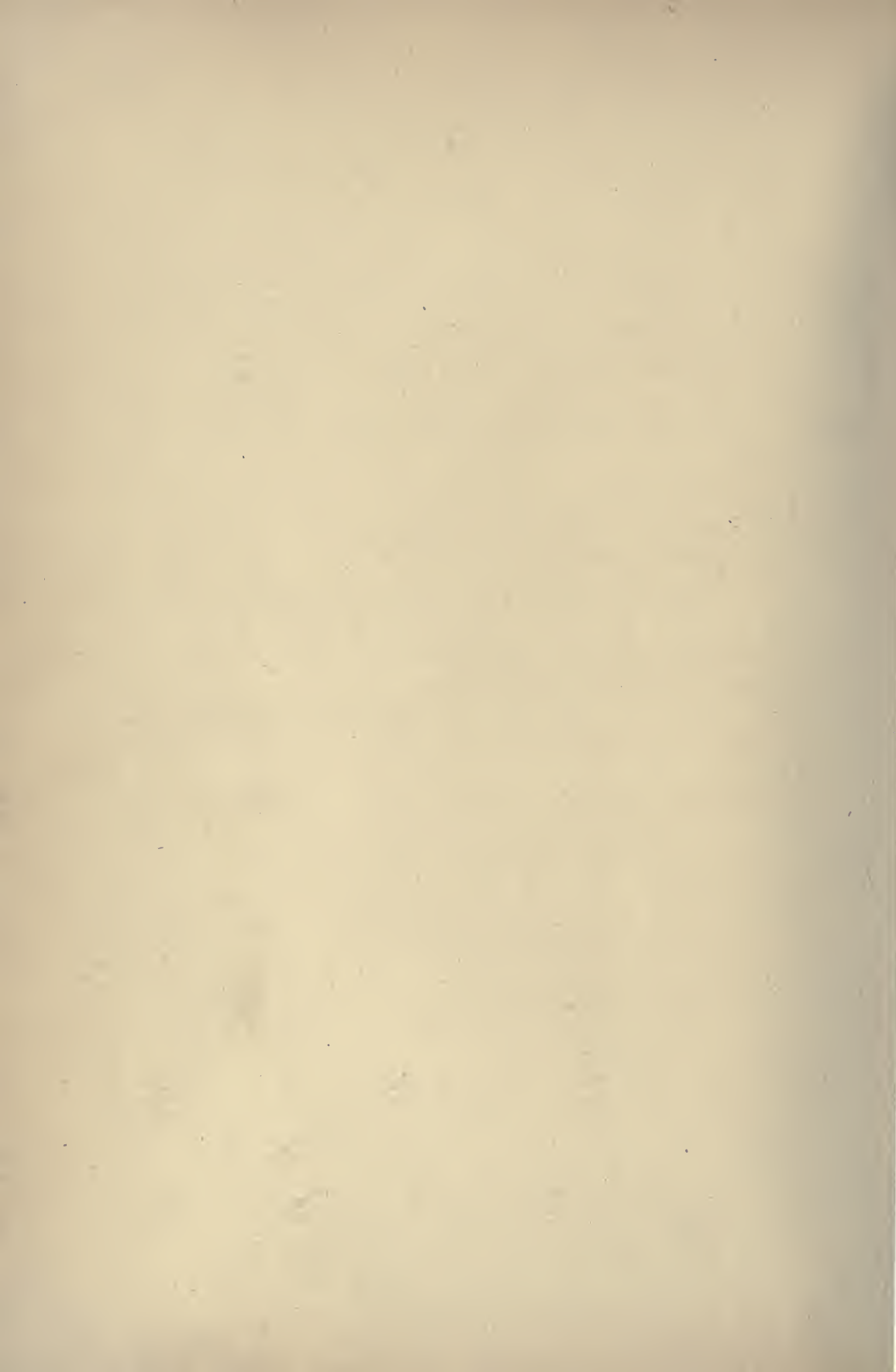
If with thy hand Thou sweep'st the sea,
It parts, and stately ships go down ;
Before thine eyes thy children drown,
Thou giv'st to Death the victory.

In air, in fire, on land, on sea,
What is there to withstand thy wrath ?
Thick-set with pain, O Lord, the path
To thee and immortality !

If harsh thy means, the end is Love ;
Grief leads to Joy, — Loss turns to Gain, —
Life was, Death is, and Death is vain, —
One we think dead awakes above.

When I am like to faint and fall,
Lift me, O Lord, to feel thy might,
Ever to know thy ways are right,
That all is good, Thou, best of all!

Grant me to feel, whate'er betide,
That thy will and not mine be done;
To know that with my cross is won
My crown, and seat by thy dear side!

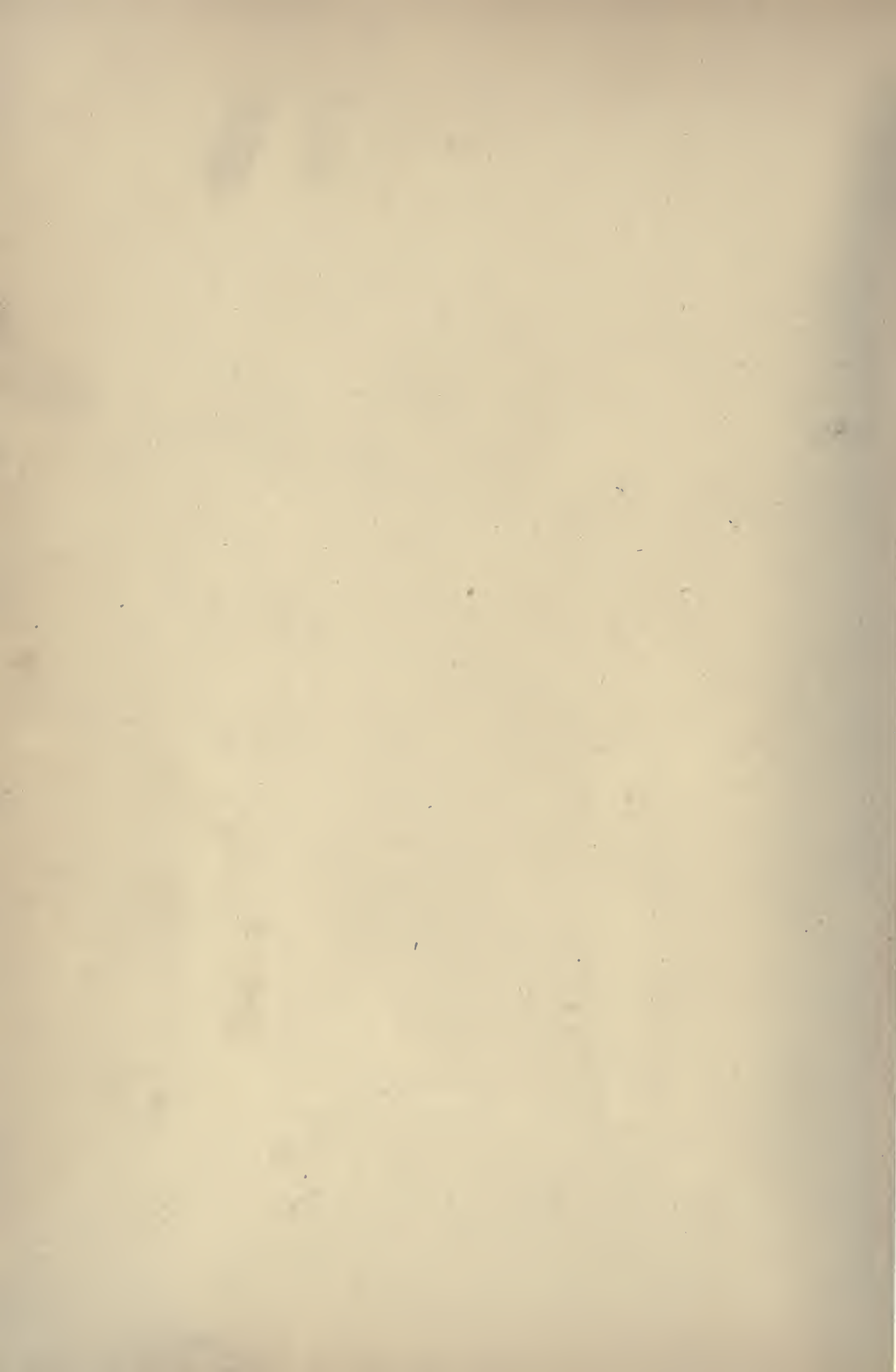


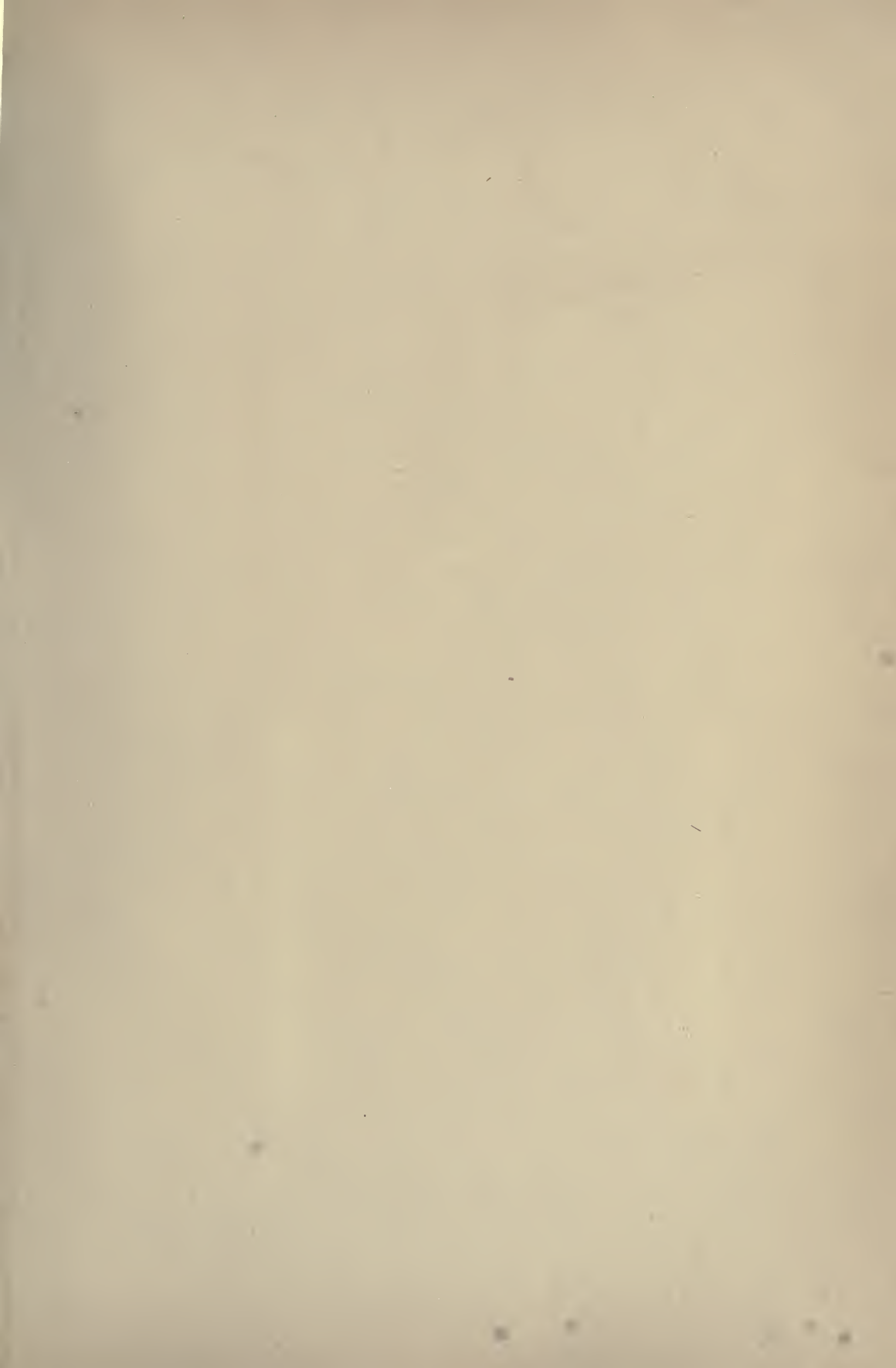
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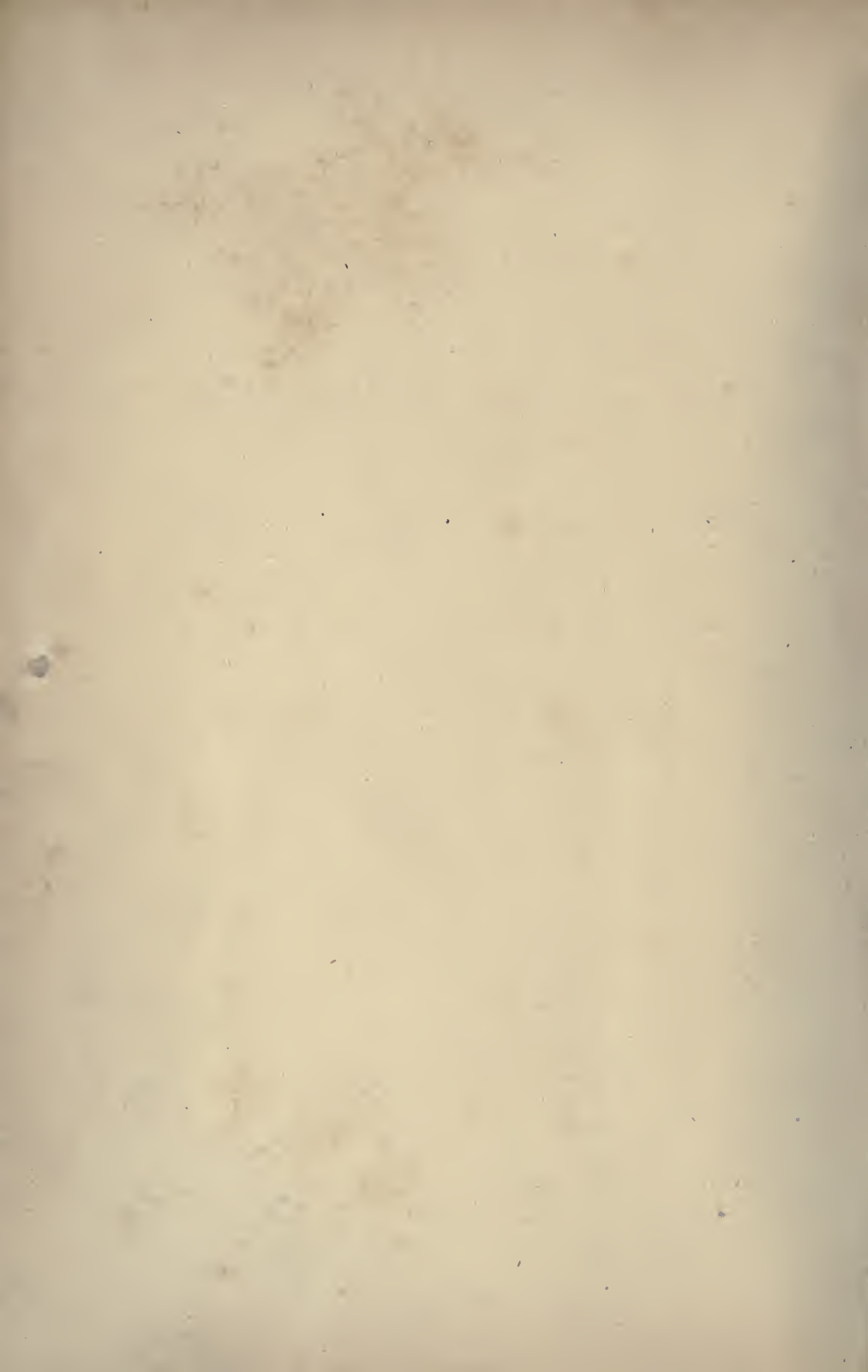
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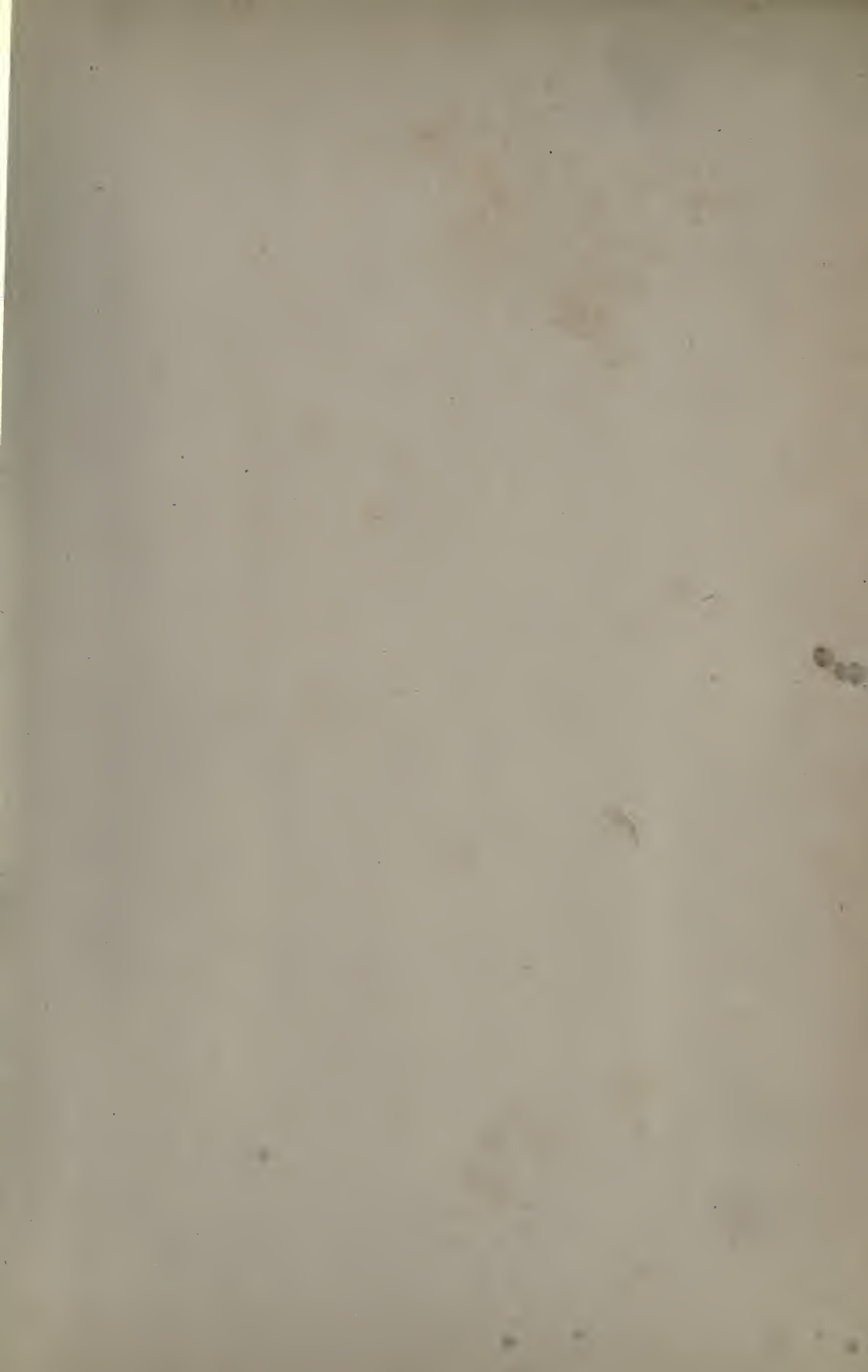
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